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54 A device for measuring the thickness of thin films.

(57) A thin film thickness measuring device is disclosed. The device includes an illuminator, a receiver and a beam deflector. The illuminator provides a collimated input light beam along an input axis. The receiver includes a lens and a diaphragm having a pinhole located at a focal point of the lens and receives a collimated output light beam along an

output axis parallel to the input axis. The beam deflector is translatable at least along a scanning axis parallel to the input axis. The beam deflector directs the input light beam towards a sample and the output light beam from the sample towards the receiver.

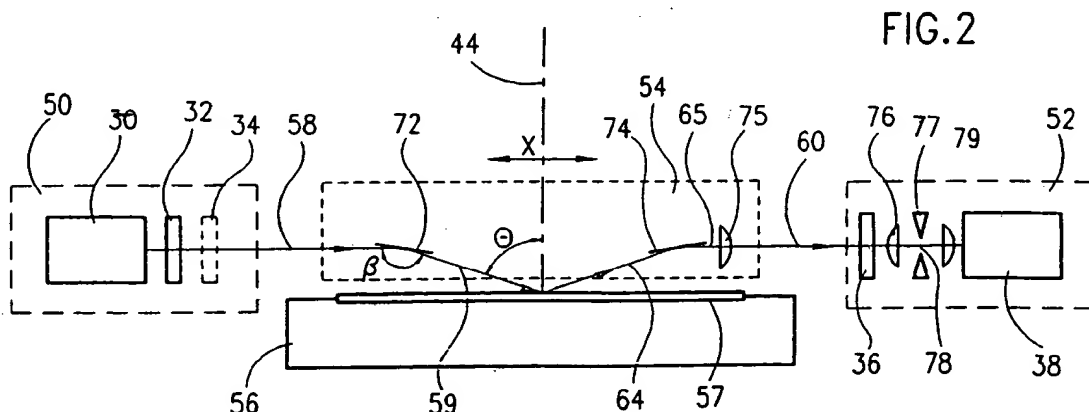


FIG.2

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to systems and methods for non-destructive quality control in general and to optical systems and methods for measuring the thickness and index of refraction of thin films, in particular.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Optical measuring instruments are typically utilized in the microelectronic industry for non-contact, non-destructive measurement of the thickness of thin films. Two main systems are utilized, spectrophotometers (or reflectometers) and ellipsometers. The following U.S. Patents represent the prior art:

- For ellipsometers: 5,166,752, 5,061,072, 5,042,951, 4,957,368, 4,681,450, 4,653,924, 4,647,207 and 4,516,855.
- For spectrophotometers: 5,181,080, 5,159,412, 5,120,966, 4,999,014 and 4,585,348.

The two prior art systems are illustrated in Figs. 1A and 1B, respectively, to which reference is now made. The spectrophotometer utilizes the fact that light beams reflected off thin film boundaries, will interfere one with another. Specifically, the spectrophotometer of Fig. 1A measures the reflectance of selected points of a sample 10 as a function of the light wavelength, usually in the visible or near UV spectral ranges. Computer analysis of the detected spectral reflection function, especially its minima and maxima, provides the thickness, and in some cases, also the index of refraction of the measured film.

The spectrophotometer typically includes a transmitter 12 with a light source and appropriate optics, a beam splitter 14, an objective lens 16, a tube lens 18 and a receiver 20 which includes optical and electronic means for measurement of light intensity as a function of the input light wavelength. The transmitter 12 produces a collimated light beam 22 which is deflected by the beam splitter 14 and focused on the sample 10 by the objective lens 16. The reflected beam, labeled 24, is collected by the microscope imaging optics (lenses 16 and 18) on a spectroscopic measurement unit within the receiver 20.

In order to measure a multiplicity of points on the sample 10, sample 10 is placed on an x-y stage 26. X-Y stage 26 is typically very precise and heavy and, as a result, moves very slowly.

The spectrophotometers have difficulty measuring structures with very small reflectance, such as thin films on glass substrates, because the relatively low brightness of traditional white light sources does not provide a sufficient signal-to-

noise ratio (SNR). Spectrophotometers also have difficulty measuring films with unknown or unrepeatable dispersions of optical constants, such as amorphous silicon.

Despite these limitations, the spectral photometry method is at present widely used in industry because the instrumentation for this method is easily combined with optical microscopes and can utilize conventional microscope optics.

Ellipsometers measure changes in the polarization of light caused by reflectance from the test surface. These changes, characterized as amplitude and phase changes, are very sensitive to the thickness and optical properties of thin films.

A prior art ellipsometer is illustrated in Fig. 1B. It includes a transmitter 30 which includes a light source and appropriate optics, a polarizer 32, an optional compensator (phase retarder) 34, an analyzer 36 and a receiver 38 with a photo-detector and appropriate electronics. The polarizer 32 polarizes the light beam 40 produced by light source 30. The reflected light beam, labeled 42, passes through the analyzer 36 before reaching the receiver 38. If the compensator 34 is used, it may be located either between the polarizer 32 and the test sample 10 or between the sample 10 and the analyzer 36.

The ellipsometric method requires oblique illumination, i.e. an angle of incidence θ between an incident light beam 40 and a normal 44 to the sample 10 must be greater than zero. The angle between a reflected light beam 42 and the normal 44 is equal to the angle of incidence θ . The angle of incidence θ should be close to the Brewster angle θ_B of the substrate. In practice, the angle of incidence θ ranges from 45° to 70° .

Because ellipsometers measure two polarization parameters (amplitude and phase), both of which are independent of the light intensity, they are quite accurate and can also measure ultra thin films of the size of $0 - 100\text{\AA}$. However, since ellipsometers require oblique illumination as well as a highly collimated light beam, their use for high spatial resolution measurements in dense patterned structures is rather difficult.

There are two basic types of fully automated ellipsometers. Null-ellipsometers (NE) provide the most accurate thickness measurements but they require at least several seconds per measuring point. Rotating-analyzer ellipsometers (RAE) provide very high speed measurements (portions of a second per measuring point), but their sensitivity and accuracy are usually less than those of null-ellipsometers.

For all of the prior art instruments, the opto-mechanical apparatus is complicated, large and heavy, and thus, the x-y stage 26 is translated between measurement points, coming to a com-

plete stop before measurement begins. The time between measurements depends on the mass of the x-y stage 26 and on the positioning accuracy requirements and may take at least several seconds (sometimes up to several tens of seconds). This limits the speed with which a thickness mapping can occur, especially during inspection of large size substrates such as 8" VLSI silicon wafers, 18"x18" LCD glass panels, etc.

The footprint, or space on the floor which each machine utilizes, is typically at least twice the size of the x-y stage 26 due to its translation.

Furthermore, the prior art measuring devices are utilized for measuring once a deposition process has been completed. They cannot be utilized for in-process control, since wafer handling and other mechanical movements are not allowed within a vacuum chamber.

Other measuring instruments are also known, one of which is described in U.S. Patent 4,826,321. The '321 patent presents a system similar to an ellipsometer. However, in this system, a mirror is utilized to direct a plane polarized laser beam to the thin film surface at the exact Brewster angle of the substrate on which the thin film lies.

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

It is therefore an object of the present invention to overcome the limitations of the prior art.

There is therefore provided apparatus for thickness measurement which performs scanning, thereby providing fast multiple measurements on the whole surface of the inspected object. The apparatus includes a beam deflector for deflecting a light beam to and from the surface while maintaining a predetermined angle of incidence and reflection.

Specifically there is provided, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, a device for measuring the thickness of thin films on a sample which includes a) an illuminator for providing a collimated input light beam along an input axis, b) a receiver for receiving a collimated output light beam along an output axis parallel to the input axis, and c) a beam deflector, translatable at least along a scanning axis parallel to the input axis, for directing the input light beam towards the sample and the output light beam from the sample towards the receiver. The receiver includes a lens and a diaphragm having a pinhole which is located at a focal point of the lens.

Additionally, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the beam deflector can be one- or two-dimensional. In the one-dimensional case, the beam deflector includes a) a first beam deflecting element which deflects the input light beam towards the sample, b) a

second beam deflecting element which deflects a light beam reflected from the sample along the output axis, and c) an objective lens which collimates the reflected beam. The collimated beam is the output light beam.

In the two-dimensional case, the beam deflector translates along the scanning axis and along a second scanning axis perpendicular to the third axis. The beam deflector preferably includes four mirrors and an objective lens. The first mirror deflects the input light beam from the input axis to the second scanning axis. The second mirror deflects the input light beam from the second scanning axis to the sample. The third mirror deflects a reflected light beam from the sample to the second scanning axis. The fourth mirror for deflecting the reflected light beam from the second scanning axis to the output axis. The objective lens is operative to collimate the reflected beam.

Moreover, in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the device is an ellipsometer. The receiver additionally includes an analyzer and a photodetector and the first and second beam deflecting elements are mirrors. The illuminator includes a light source and a polarizer. The illuminator or the receiver can optionally include a compensator.

In accordance with an alternative preferred embodiment of the present invention, the device is a spectrophotometer. In this embodiment, the receiver additionally includes a spectrophotometric detector, the first beam deflecting element is a beam splitter and the second beam deflecting element is a mirror. In addition, the beam deflector additionally comprises a lens for focusing the input light beam on the sample after deflection by the beam splitter.

The apparatus of the present invention may be incorporated within equipment, such as cluster tools, for film deposition.

There is also provided, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, apparatus for measuring thin film thickness and for acquiring an image of an area to be measured. The device includes a) an illuminating unit for providing a collimated input light beam along an input axis, b) a receiver for receiving a collimated output light beam along an output axis parallel to the input axis and c) a beam deflector, translatable at least along a scanning axis parallel to the input axis, for directing the input light beam towards the sample and the output light beam from the sample towards the receiver. The input light beam is preferably formed of at least one of coherent and incoherent light and impinges on the sample at a desired angle of incidence. The receiver includes a) a first imaging lens, b) a grating located at a focal point of the first imaging lens at an angle to an axis of the output light beam equivalent to the angle of incidence, the

grating having a pinhole located on the axis of the output light beam, c) at least one photodetector for detecting generally coherent light received through the pinhole, d) a second imaging lens and e) a camera for receiving incoherent light from the area to be measured as deflected by the grating and as imaged by the second imaging lens.

Additionally, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the device includes apparatus for measuring an actual angle of incidence which may vary from the desired angle of incidence. The apparatus for measuring utilizes optical elements forming part of the illuminator and receiver. The apparatus for measuring preferably includes a position sensing device.

Moreover, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the device is incorporated within a cluster tool having a vacuum chamber in which the sample is held. The vacuum chamber preferably includes a cover having glass plates incorporated therein at an angle perpendicular to axes of the beams impinging on and reflecting from the sample. The glass plates extend parallel to the scanning axis.

Finally, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the device includes a polarizer, analyzer and optional compensator which are generally located close to the sample.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention will be understood and appreciated more fully from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the drawings in which:

Figs. 1A and 1B are schematic illustrations of a prior art spectrophotometer and a prior art ellipsometer;

Fig. 2 is a schematic side view illustration of an optical measuring device having a one-dimensional scanning device incorporated therein, constructed and operative in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention; Fig. 3 is a schematic top view illustration of an optical measuring device having a two-dimensional scanning device incorporated therein, constructed and operative in accordance with a second preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a partial schematic, partial block-diagram illustration of an ellipsometric in-process thickness monitor utilizing the principles illustrated in Fig. 2;

Fig. 5A is a side view schematic illustration of a beam deflector cooperating with a vacuum chamber, the beam deflector forming part of the monitor of Fig. 4;

Fig. 5B is a schematic illustration of an illumination unit and part of the beam deflector of Fig. 5A, both forming part of the monitor of Fig. 4;

Fig. 5C is a schematic illustration of a detection unit and part of the beam deflector of Fig. 5A, both forming part of the monitor of Fig. 4; and

Fig. 6 is a schematic illustration of a spectrophotometer having a one-dimensional scanning device incorporated therein, constructed and operative in accordance with the principles of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Reference is now made to Figs. 2 and 3 which schematically illustrate an optical measuring device having one and two-dimensional scanning devices, respectively, constructed and operative in accordance with preferred embodiments of the present invention. Fig. 2 is a side view and Fig. 3 is a top view.

In Figs. 2 and 3, the optical measuring device is an ellipsometer. This is by way of example only; the principles of the present invention can also be implemented in a spectrophotometer, as illustrated in Fig. 6, described in detail hereinbelow.

The ellipsometer of Fig. 2 typically comprises a stationary illuminator 50, a stationary detector 52, a translating beam deflector 54, and a stationary support 56, such as a stage, ring, etc., for holding a sample 57.

The illuminator 50 typically comprises of elements similar to those of the prior art. Therefore, similar elements have similar reference numerals.

Specifically, the illuminator 50 typically comprises transmitter 30 which includes a laser light source, a polarizer 32 and an optional compensator (phase retarder) 34. As in the prior art, the laser light source, with its associated optics (not shown), produces a highly collimated laser light beam.

The beam deflector 54 typically comprises two mirrors 72 and 74 and a first objective lens 75. Mirror 72 provides the desired angle of incidence θ to input light beam 58 by deflecting beam 58 by an angle $\beta = 90 + \theta$. Mirror 74 deflects a light beam 64, reflected from the sample 57, to a beam 65 along a direction parallel to the X scanning axis. First objective lens 75, whose focal plane is at the plane of sample 57, typically collimates beam 65, thereby producing a collimated reflected beam 60.

To effect scanning, only the beam deflector 54 is translated along the X-axis. The movement of the beam deflector 54 generally does not affect the measurement quality of the ellipsometer since the input and output light beams 58 and 60 are highly collimated and parallel to the scanning axis.

Because beam deflector 54 only comprises the mirrors 72 and 74 and objective lens 75, it is lightweight and therefore, its translation is fast, on the order of the measurement time. The support 56 is stationary, therefore, the device of the present invention has a minimal footprint of the size of the sample 57.

It is noted that the direction changing effected by mirrors 72 and 74 changes the polarization state of the light. These undesired changes must be separated from the desired polarization changes caused by the sample 57. If the optical parameters of the mirrors are stable, the undesired changes do not vary and thus, they can be measured and accounted for when interpreting the measurement of the sample 57.

It is further noted that reflection from the mirrors 72 and 74 may be not fully specular. Typically, some depolarized scattered light is also produced. While the percentage of scattered light is very small relative to the specular light (1:1000 or even less, depending on the quality of the mirror surface), the scattered light could limit the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) of the system and thus, limit the measurement accuracy.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the detector 52 typically comprises scattered light reducing elements in addition to the standard analyzer 36 and receiver 38. The scattered light reducing elements typically are a second objective lens 76 and a diaphragm 77, located at the focal plane of objective lens 76 and having a pinhole 78, and a condenser 79.

The analyzer 36 is typically placed within the collimated light beam 60, between objective lenses 75 and 76. Since pinhole 78 is placed at the center of the image plane which is the focal plane of lens 76, it acts as an aperture stop, allowing only the collimated portion of light beam 60 to pass through. Thus, the pinhole drastically reduces the widely scattered depolarized light introduced by the mirrors. Condenser 79 collects the light from the pinhole 78 and provides it to receiver 38.

For a pinhole 76 of 50 μ m in diameter and a lens focal length of 30mm, the angular aperture of the detector 52 is less than one mrad. For optical configurations having six or fewer mirrors between the polarizer 32 and the analyzer 36, the resultant intensity of scattered light reaching the detector 38 is less than 10⁻³% of the polarized light which is the minimum necessary for accurate ellipsometric measurements.

Receiver 38 typically comprises a photo-detector and appropriate electronics. Although not shown, the detector 52 can also include the compensator 34, located before the analyzer 36.

The ellipsometer of Fig. 3 provides two-dimensional scanning with a two-dimensional scanning

unit 80. The remaining elements are similar to those of Fig. 2 and therefore, have similar reference numerals.

Scanning unit 80 typically comprises a beam deflector 82 (see Fig. 2) similar to beam deflector 54, which slides along X-axis rails 84. The X-axis rails 84 are attached together and to carriages 90, forming an X-axis unit 86 which, in turn, translates along Y-axis rails 88 via the carriages 90.

Scanning unit 80 typically also comprises mirrors 92 and 94 (see Fig. 3) which deflect beams between the X- and Y-axes. Specifically, mirror 92 deflects the input beam 58 from the Y-axis to the X-axis, producing beam 96 which is parallel to the X-axis. Mirror 94 receives beam 98, the output of the beam deflector 82, along the X-axis and deflects it towards the Y-axis, producing thereby reflected beam 60.

It is noted that the scattered light reducing elements 76 - 79 are efficient for a number of mirrors, as long as none of the mirrors are located very close to either the object or image planes.

Reference is now made to Figs. 4 and 5A, 5B and 5C which illustrate an in-process thickness monitor. Fig. 4 is a partial schematic, partial block-diagram illustration and Figs. 5A - 5C are schematic illustrations of the elements of the monitor of Fig. 4.

The monitor of Fig. 4 is operative to measure the thickness of thin films within deposition equipment such as cluster tools. A cluster tool is a large vacuum system which consists of several chambers, each performing a specific deposition process on a single silicon wafer ("single wafer processing"). An internal robot transfers each wafer from chamber to chamber without breaking the vacuum, thus several deposition processes may be carried out before the wafer is removed from the cluster tool.

The present invention is typically installed on a cool-down vacuum chamber to which each wafer is brought for one-two minutes after each deposition process. It thus measures the film thickness after each deposition.

In accordance with the present invention, the in-process monitor comprises a coherent and an incoherent imaging unit and an angle of incidence measuring unit, portions of whose optical paths are identical. The coherent imaging unit is utilized for ellipsometric measurements and thus, is similar to that described hereinabove with respect to Fig. 2. The incoherent imaging unit is typically operative for pattern recognition.

The monitor comprises an illumination unit, labeled 100, a detection unit, labeled 102, a beam deflector, labeled 104, and support 105, similar to support 56.

Since a vacuum must be maintained, all of the elements of the monitor, except the support 105 and the sample 57 on it, must exist outside of the vacuum chamber, labeled 108. This is shown in Figs. 4 and 5A.

In accordance with the present invention, built into a cover 110 of vacuum chamber 108, along the direction of the X-axis, are two stationary glass plates 112 operative to enable the light beam to reach the sample 57 from outside the chamber. To minimize the influence plates 112 have on optical measurements, the planes of their surfaces are located perpendicular to the path of optical beams 59 and 64.

The glass plates 112 are mechanically strong enough to withstand the pressure difference between the vacuum within chamber 108 and the atmospheric pressure outside of it. The plates 112 are made from stress-free glass of about 5 mm thick and their aspect ratio (width/length) is about 1:50. The resultant induced birefringence is negligible and therefore, the plates generally do not affect the optical measurements.

Beam deflector 104 (see Fig. 5A) typically comprises focusing lens 150 and objective lens 152, two mirrors 154 and 156 and X-axis translation apparatus 153 (see Fig. 4), such as a linear motor.

During ellipsometric measurements, focusing lens 150 focuses the polarized and collimated light beam, labeled 158, onto the surface of sample 57 and the objective lens 152 collimates the divergent beam 64 into the reflected beam, labeled 159. An important fact to note is that lenses 150 and 152 are thin, simple lenses made of stress free glass to reduce to zero their birefringence. They may also be located between the mirrors 154 and 156 and the sample 57.

The two mirrors 154 and 156 are similar to mirrors 72 and 74 of Fig. 2 and are operative to direct the light beam to and from the sample 57 at the desired angle of incidence θ in the Y-Z plane and to deflect the light beam between the X- and Y-axes, as shown in Fig. 4.

Thus, the light beam 59 always impinges on the sample 57 at the desired angle of incidence θ , even though the beam deflector 104 is translated along the X-axis.

The illumination unit 100 is detailed in Fig. 5B and typically comprises a light source unit 120, a quarter wave plate (QWP) 122, a polarizer 124 and a compensator 126.

The light source unit 120 typically comprises two coherent light sources 130 and 132 for ellipsometric measurements and one incoherent light source 134 and a condenser 136 for incoherent imaging. The condenser 136 collimates the output of light source 134.

Illumination unit 100 also comprises two beam splitters 138 for combining the light from the three light sources 130, 132 and 134 onto a single path 139. Beam-splitters 138 typically are dichroic or polarizing. If they are polarizing, the planes of polarization of the two lasers 130 and 132 are set to be orthogonal.

The two coherent light sources 130 and 132 are laser diodes which produce highly monochromatic and collimated light for ellipsometric measurements. Laser 130 has a wavelength λ_1 in the visible spectral range, preferably within the range of 630 to 680nm, and laser 132 has a wavelength λ_2 in the near infra-red (IR) spectral range, preferably within the range of 810 to 830nm. The visible light is preferable for measuring such films as silicon dioxide, silicon nitride and other dielectric layers. The IR light is preferable for silicon layers (poly-silicon, amorphous silicon and the like). Under IR light, the silicon layers are almost transparent and their optical parameters are generally repeatable between processes.

The incoherent light source 134, used during pattern recognition, can be any suitable light source, such as a high brightness LED, quartz-tungsten lamp, xenon arc lamp, etc. Its specific range should preferably be narrow, for example of $780 \pm 20\text{nm}$.

During imaging operations, the incoherent light source 134 is operative and it, together with the focusing lens 150, the and the condenser 136 form an incoherent illuminator whose light beam forms an incoherent light spot on the surface of sample 57. The size and divergence of the incoherent light beam must be sufficient to illuminate the desired field of view, e.g. about 1 mm in its shortest dimension, at any position of the beam deflector 104 along the X-axis.

The quarter-wave plate (QWP) 122, useful for ellipsometric measurements, is oriented with its optical axis at an angle of $\pm 45^\circ$ relative to the planes of polarization of the lasers 130 and 132 and transforms their linear polarization to a circular one. The QWP 122 should be achromatic throughout the utilized spectral range of 630 to 830nm. Suitable achromatic QWPs are manufactured, for example, by Meadowlark Optics company, USA.

The polarizer 124 and compensator 126 have associated therewith motor drives 140 and 142, respectively. Although not shown, motor drives 140 and 142 typically operate with precise angular encoders. Since most ellipsometric measurement algorithms do not require rotation of the compensator, a manual driving mechanism (for alignment only) may alternatively be used instead the motor drive 142.

For the two wavelength configuration of the present invention, the polarizer 124 is achromatic.

A suitable polarizer is a Glan-Thomson polarization prism. For a single wavelength configuration in the red spectral range, a sheet polarizer, such as the HN38S type from Polaroid Corporation of the USA, is suitable. For all polarizers, an extinction ratio of more than 10^5 is required for reaching the thickness measurement accuracy required in microelectronic deposition process control.

The detection unit 102 (Fig. 5C) typically comprises a two-dimensional image acquisition system (part of the incoherent imaging unit), an ellipsometric detector unit (part of the coherent imaging unit) and an angle of incidence measurement unit.

The ellipsometric detector unit of detection unit 102 is comprised of elements similar to those of the ellipsometer of Fig. 2, but extended to operate with the two wavelengths, λ_1 and λ_2 . The ellipsometric detector unit operates with the objective lens 152 and typically comprises the analyzer, labeled 160, its associated motor 162, an imaging lens 164, a diaphragm 165 having a pinhole 166, a condenser 168, two independent photo-detectors 170 and 172, two band pass spectral filters 174 and 176 and a beam splitter 178. The analyzer 160 is similar to polarizer 124 and is therefore, achromatic for the two wavelength configuration.

Since, as in the embodiment of Fig. 2, the pinhole 166 is located at the image plane of the optical imaging system (lenses 152 and 164) which is the focal plane of lens 164, only that portion of the light reflected from the surface of sample 57 which is the size of pinhole 166 will come through pinhole 166. Condenser 168 collects the light and focusses it onto the photo-detectors 170 and 172.

The beam splitter 178 splits the incoming beam into two beams, each having the appropriate wavelength, λ_1 and λ_2 .

The photo-detectors 170 and 172 detect, via the filters 174 and 176 respectively, the intensity of light of the two wavelengths λ_1 and λ_2 , respectively. For most applications, the photo-detectors are silicon photovoltaic detectors, such as the S5591 manufactured by Hamamatsu Photonics U.U. of Hamamatsu City, Japan. If necessary, more sensitive but more expensive photomultipliers may be used.

It is noted that the present invention allows simultaneous measurement of two wavelengths which enables the measurement of two pairs of ellipsometric parameters, the amplitude parameter ψ and the phase parameter δ . As a result, four parameters of the thin film structure, e.g. thickness and index of refraction of each of two layers, can be simultaneously determined. Such a measurement is useful when two different layers are deposited on the sample 57 in one deposition cycle.

Since lenses 152 and 164 are designed to be generally free of aberrations in the two wavelengths λ_1 and λ_2 , the spatial resolution of the monitor of the present invention depends only on the size of pinhole 166 and on the point spread function of the coherent imaging system. The point spread function is defined by the F-stop of the coherent imaging system and is generally quite small. Practically, the thickness measurements are carried out on scribe lines, pads or special test areas which are not less than $50\mu\text{m}$ wide and therefore, a pinhole size of 20 - $40\mu\text{m}$ and an F# of 5 - 6 is acceptable.

It is noted that a circular pinhole produces an elliptical measurement spot, with an aspect ratio of $1/\cos\theta$. If this is unacceptable, the shape of pinhole 166 has to be asymmetrical to compensate.

The two-dimensional image acquisition system typically operates in conjunction with the incoherent image illuminator and utilizes the objective lens 152 located on the beam deflector 104. The image acquisition system typically comprises the imaging lens 164, the diaphragm 165 with the pinhole 166, a magnifying lens 180, a mirror 182, an optional band pass filter 184 and a high resolution, area charge coupled device (CCD) 186. For the purposes of the image acquisition system, the diaphragm 165 is made from a grating 167 which has the pinhole 166 therein. The grating 167 does not affect the ellipsometric measurements.

The surfaces of sample 57 and grating 167 are respectively located in the focal planes of lenses 152 and 164. The lenses 152 and 164 typically have the same focal length, thereby providing an optical magnification M of 1X.

As is known in the art, if the object plane is tilted relative to the imaging axis (the axis of the reflected beam 64), the image plane is also tilted relative to the optical axis (the axis of a beam 188) from the analyzer 160. However, the extent of the tilting of the image plane is a function of the magnification, as described by the Scheimpflug equation:

$$\text{tg}\theta' = M \cdot \text{tg}\theta, \quad (1)$$

where θ is the angle of incidence and θ' is the tilt angle of the image plane.

In the monitor of Fig. 5, the grating 167, tilted by the angle θ relative to axis 188, is the imaging plane for the imaging system of lenses 152 and 164 and is the object plane (or intermediate image plane) for the imaging system of lens 180.

Since the magnification M of the monitor is 1, the object plane (sample surface) and the image plane are tilted at the same angle θ relative to their optical axes. Unfortunately, when the image plane is thus tilted, only a portion of it can be focussed

on the CCD 186.

In order to force the image plane to be perpendicular to the optical axis, thereby ensuring that the entire image plane is focussed on the CCD 186, the grating 167 is aligned along the intermediate image plane. The grating 167 is chosen so that only the first diffraction maximum is utilized for imaging to the CCD 186. For example, for $\lambda_3 = 780 \text{ nm}$, $\theta = 70^\circ$ and a grating frequency 1200 cycles/mm, the image plane of a diffracted beam 190 is almost perpendicular to the optical axis. Therefore the image plane may be enlarged by the magnifying lens 180 without the above-described Scheimpflug problem.

The magnifying lens 180 is placed in the direction of the first diffraction maximum for the wavelength λ_3 of the incoherent illuminator. The lens 180 provides magnification, of at least 5X, which is strong enough for recognition of the test areas on the wafer.

Mirror 182 directs the diffracted beam 190 towards the CCD 186 which is located at the image plane of magnifying lens 180. The high resolution CCD 186, such as the TM-6CN CCD manufactured by Pulnix America Inc. of Sunnyvale, California, USA, transforms the image to a video signal.

If lasers 130 and 132 operate at the same time as the incoherent light source 134, the optional band pass filter 184 ensures that only light from the incoherent illuminator is used for imaging.

If the incoherent light is not monochromatic, the diffraction of grating 167 will produce spectral dispersion. In this case, the numerical aperture of lens 180 has to be high enough to collect most, if not all, of the diffraction beams within the entire spectral range. In order to achieve high image quality, the lens 180 should be corrected for the chromatic aberrations in the spectral range of the incoherent light.

The quality of the obtained image depends strongly on the F-stops (F#) of the objective and imaging lenses 152 and 164 and the aberrations that they produce. For a focal length for lenses 152 and 164 of about 30mm and a beam diameter of about 5mm, the F# is about 6, a value which is used for high quality photography and other applications.

The lens 180 is a high quality microscope grade objective lens and therefore, does not significantly affect the final image quality. The grating 167 also does not significantly affect the image quality because its spatial frequency in the image plane ($1200/5X = 240 \text{ cyc/mm}$) is significantly greater than the Nyquist frequency of the CCD (about 50 cyc/mm). Therefore the above two-dimensional image acquisition system provides the high spatial resolution needed for accurate pattern recognition.

For the two-dimensional image acquisition system, the pinhole 166 serves to locate the measurement spot in the image of the sample 57. Since the pinhole 166 is located at the intermediate image plane (grating 167) and since it allows light to pass through it, rather than being reflected toward the CCD 186, the pinhole 166 appears as a sharp dark point in the image produced by the CCD 186. Thus, when viewing the CCD image, the location of the measurement spot is immediately known, it being the location of the dark spot.

It is noted that the pinhole 166 performs three functions: 1) it reduces the scattered light from the mirrors 154 and 156; 2) it provides high spatial resolution; and 3) it provides an indication of the location of the measurement spot in the image of the area being measured.

The angle of incidence measurement unit provides feedback about the actual angle of incidence θ for situations when the surface of the sample 57 is not absolutely flat.

The angle of incidence measurement unit typically comprises the objective lens 152, a beam-splitter 194, a spectral filter 196 and a position-sensitive detector (PSD) 198, such as the S2044 detector manufactured by Hamamatsu Photonics U.U. Beam splitter 194 provides a portion of reflected beam 159 to the PSD 198 via the spectral filter 196.

Since the measurement point on the sample 57 is in the focal plane of objective lens 152 and since the PSD 198 is in the far field of this lens, any change in the angle of reflection (equal to the angle of incidence on the non-flat surface of sample 57) displaces the light spot on the PSD 198 and may be accurately measured. If the light spot is centered on the PSD 198, the angle of incidence is the expected angle of incidence θ , typically of 70° . If the spot is below or above the central location, the actual angle of incidence is larger or smaller, respectively, than θ . The relationship describing the extent of the skew with the change in the actual angle of incidence is calibrated prior to operating the monitor. The ellipsometric measurements are then interpreted, by a data processor (not shown), in light of the actual angle of incidence.

It is noted that most supports typically comprise means (not shown) for keeping the top surface of sample 57 in a fixed position, such as by vacuum or electrostatic clamping, an auto-focus mechanism. Once such systems have been actuated, the only reason for beam displacement on the PSD 198 is the deviation in the angle of incidence.

Reference is now made to Fig. 6 which illustrates a spectrophotometer designed in accordance with the principles of the present invention. Thus, the spectrophotometer comprises a light source

200, a beam deflector 202, a support 204 holding a sample 208, and a detector unit 206.

The beam deflector 202 typically comprises a objective lens 210, a beam splitter 212 and a mirror 214. From the light source 200, the beam splitter receives a light beam 209, parallel to the surface of the sample 208, and deflects it toward the sample 208, via lens 210. The sample 208 is located in the focal plane of lens 210. The reflected light beam (not labeled) is collimated by lens 210, passes through beam splitter 212 and is deflected by mirror 214 along an axis parallel to the surface of sample 208.

Since light beams 209 and 211 are parallel to each other and to the surface of sample 208, the movement of the beam deflector 202 in the X direction does not affect the measurements of the detector unit 206.

As in the embodiments of Figs. 2 and 3, detector unit 206 typically comprises an imaging lens 218, a diaphragm 220 having a pinhole 222 and a condenser 224. Detector unit 206 additionally comprises a spectrophotometric detector 226. Elements 218 - 224 reduce the scatter due to mirror 214 and provide a useful beam to the spectrophotometric detector 226.

It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that the present invention is not limited to what has been particularly shown and described hereinabove. Rather the scope of the present invention is defined by the claims which follow:

Claims

1. A thickness measuring device for measuring the thickness of thin films on a sample, the device comprising:
 - an illuminator for providing a collimated input light beam along an input axis;
 - a receiver for receiving a collimated output light beam along an output axis parallel to said input axis; and
 - a beam deflector, translatable at least along a scanning axis parallel to said input axis, for directing said input light beam towards said sample and said output light beam from said sample towards said receiver,
 - wherein said receiver comprises a lens and a diaphragm having a pinhole, said pinhole located at a focal point of said lens.
2. A device according to claim 1 and wherein said beam deflector comprises one-dimensional translation means for translation along said scanning axis.
3. A device according to claim 1 and wherein said beam deflector comprises a first beam

deflecting element for deflecting said input light beam towards said sample, a second beam deflecting element for deflecting a light beam reflected from said sample along said output axis, and an objective lens for collimating said reflected beam thereby to produce said output light beam.

4. A device according to claim 1 and wherein said beam deflector comprises two-dimensional translation means for translating said beam deflector along said scanning axis and along a second scanning axis perpendicular to said first scanning axis.
5. A device according to claim 4 and wherein said beam deflector comprises a first mirror for deflecting said input light beam from said input axis to said second scanning axis, a second mirror for deflecting said input light beam from said second scanning axis to said sample, a third mirror deflecting a reflected light beam from said sample to said second scanning axis a fourth mirror for deflecting said reflected light beam from said second scanning axis to said output axis, and an objective lens for collimating said reflected beam.
6. A device according to claim 3 and wherein said first and second beam deflecting elements are mirrors.
7. A device according to claim 1 wherein said illuminator comprises a light source and a polarizer and said receiver comprises an analyzer and a photodetector.
8. A device according to claim 9 wherein said receiver additionally comprises a spectrophotometric detector and wherein said beam deflector additionally comprises a lens for focusing said input light beam on said sample and for collimating light reflecting from said sample.
9. A thickness measuring device for measuring the thickness of thin films on a sample and for acquiring an image of an area to be measured, the device comprising:
 - an illuminating unit for providing a collimated input light beam along an input axis, said light beam being formed of at least one of coherent and incoherent light;
 - a receiver for receiving a collimated output light beam along an output axis parallel to said input axis; and
 - a beam deflector, translatable at least along a scanning axis parallel to said input

axis, for directing said input light beam towards said sample and said output light beam from said sample towards said receiver, said input light beam impinging on said sample at a desired angle of incidence,

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wherein said receiver comprises:

a first imaging lens;

a grating located at a focal point of said first imaging lens at an angle to an axis of said output light beam equivalent to said angle of incidence, said grating having a pinhole located on said axis of said output light beam;

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at least one photodetector for detecting generally coherent light received through said pinhole;

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a second imaging lens;

a camera for receiving incoherent light from said area to be measured as deflected by said grating and imaged by said second imaging lens.

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10. A device according to claim 11 and also including means for measuring an actual angle of incidence which may vary from said desired angle of incidence, wherein said means for measuring utilizes optical elements forming part of said illuminator and receiver.
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11. A device according to claim 12 and wherein said means for measuring comprises a position sensing device.
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12. A device according to claim 11 and including a vacuum chamber in which said sample is held, said vacuum chamber comprising a cover having glass plates incorporated therein at an angle perpendicular to axes of said beams impinging on and reflecting from said sample, said glass plates extending parallel to said scanning axis.
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- 40
13. A device according to claim 11 and wherein said illuminator comprises an incoherent light source for producing an incoherent light beam, at least one coherent light source for producing at least one coherent light beam, beam splitters for combining said incoherent and coherent light beams onto a single optical path and a polarizer.
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14. A device according to claim 15 and wherein said receiver additionally comprises an analyzer.
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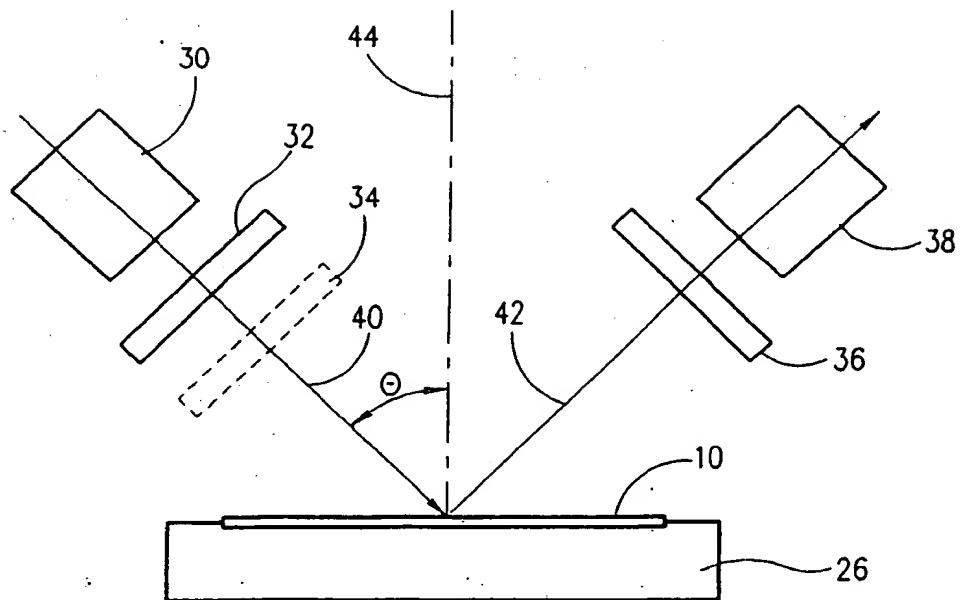


FIG. 1B
PRIOR ART

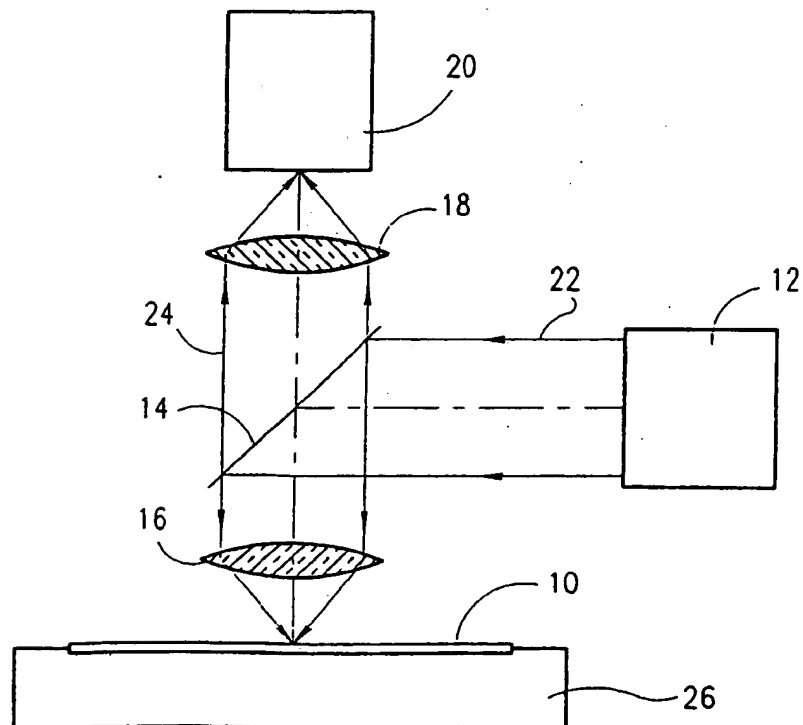


FIG. 1A
PRIOR ART

FIG. 2

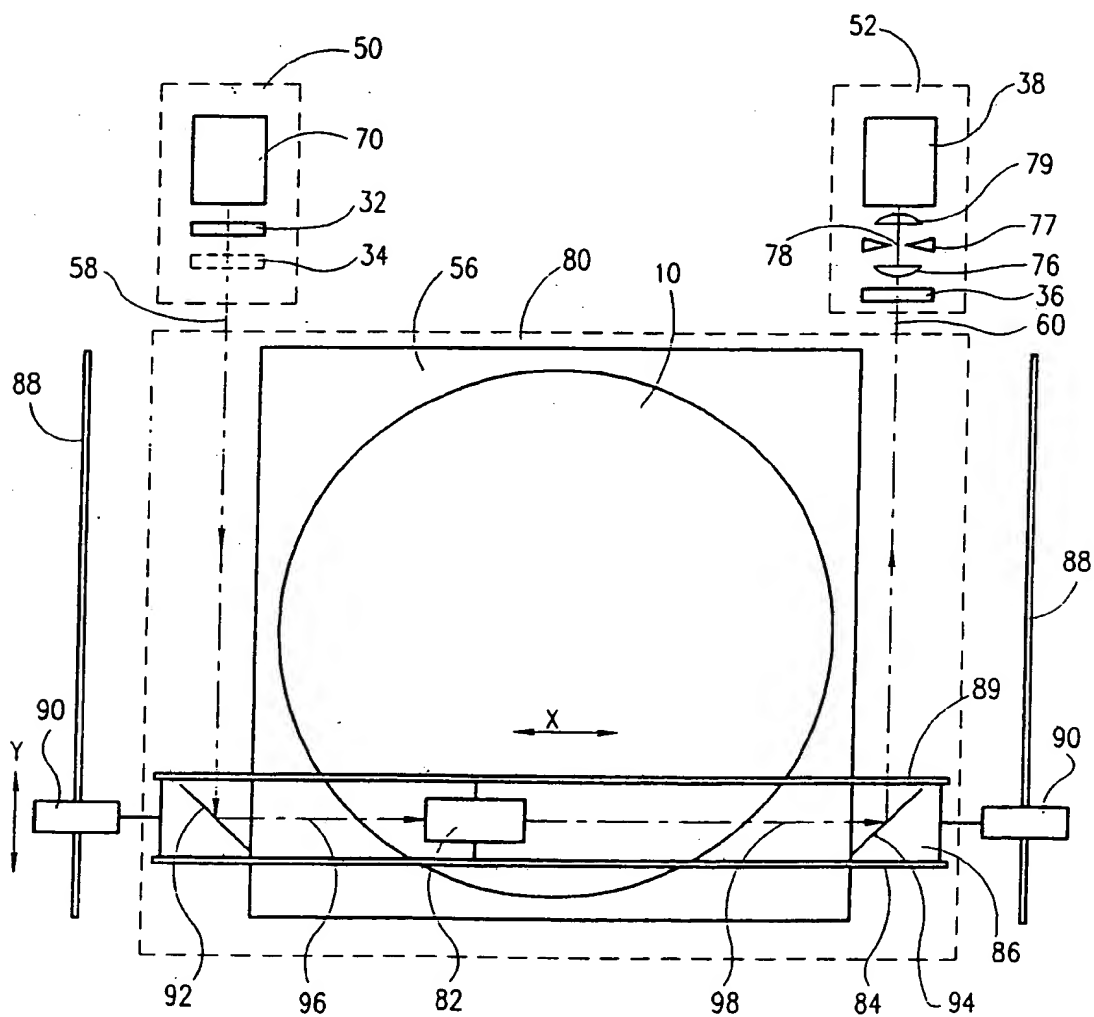
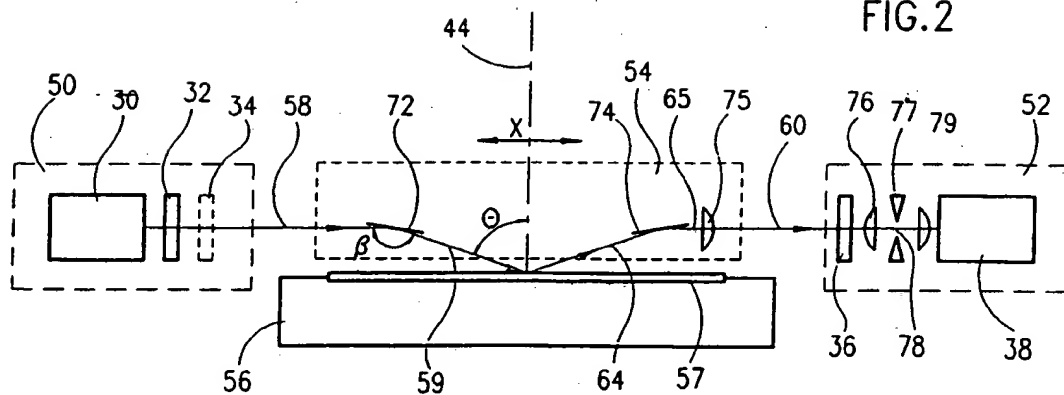
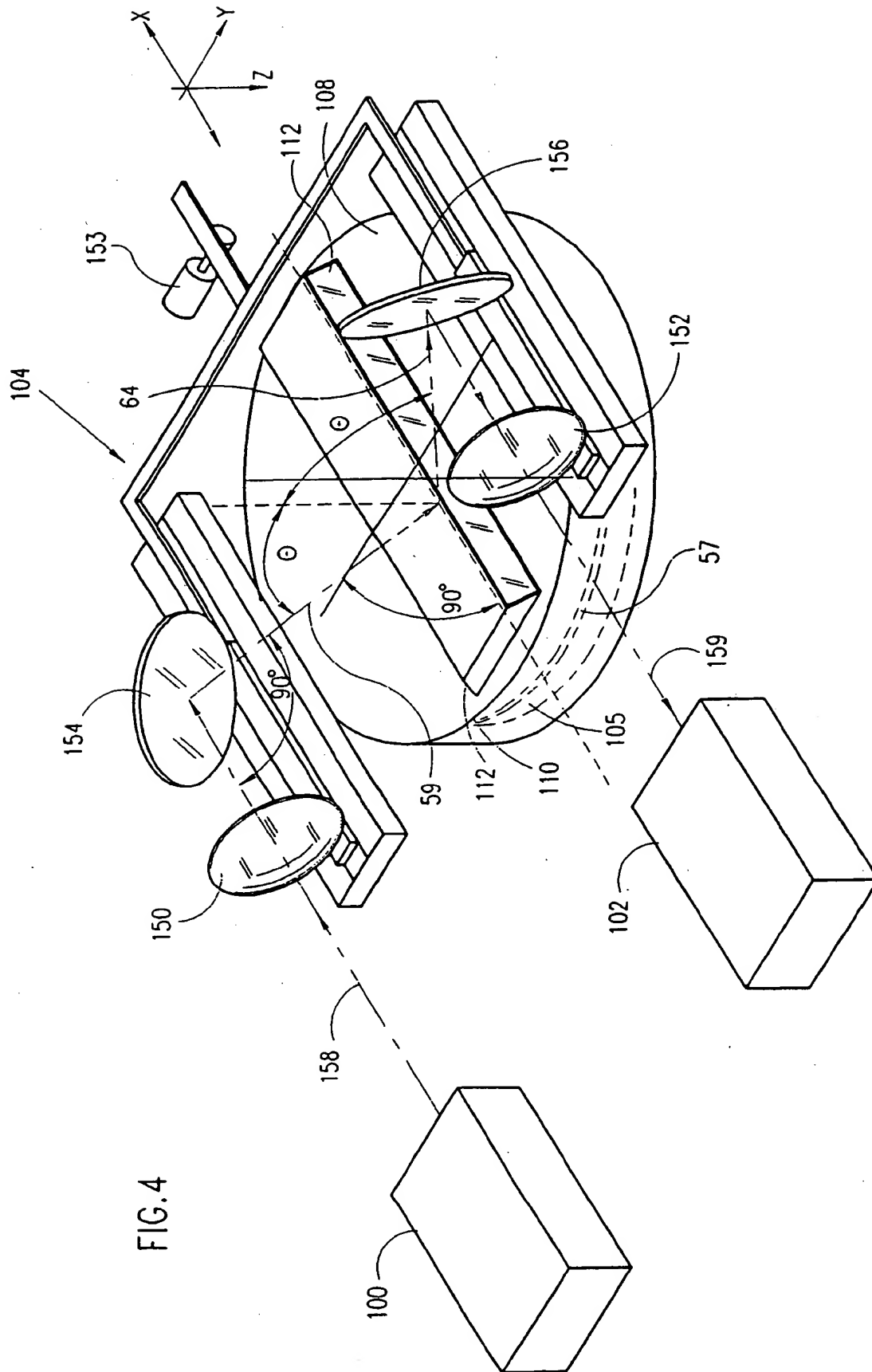
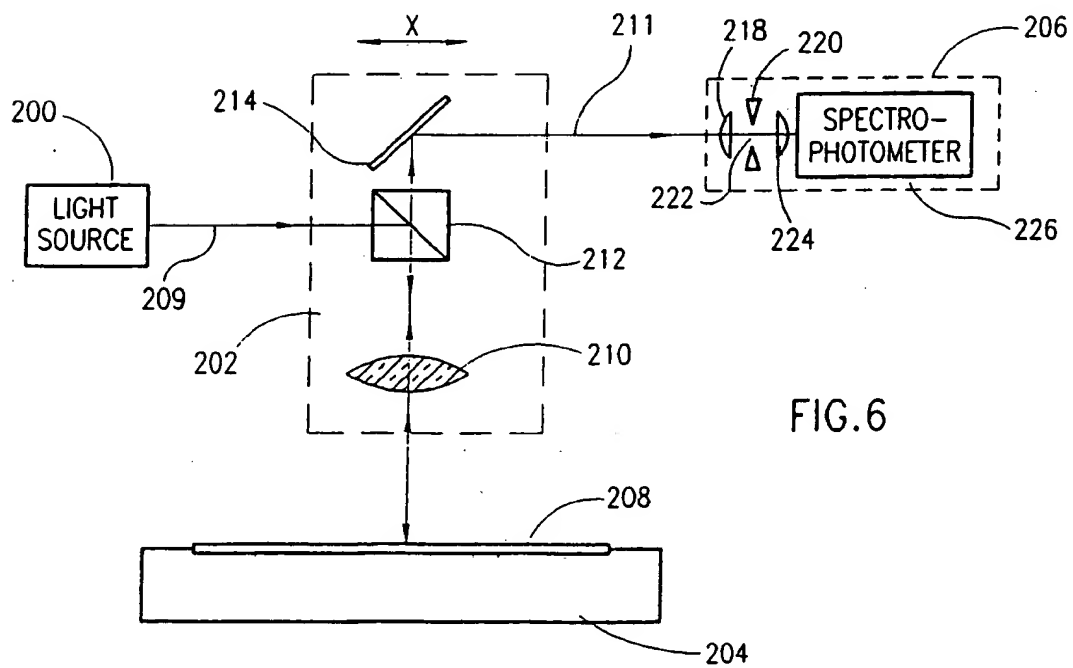
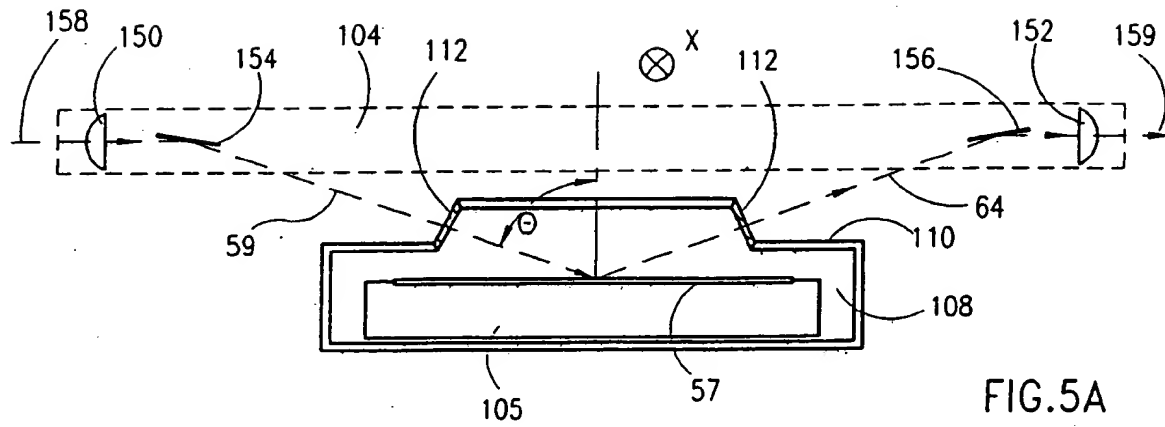


FIG. 3



104





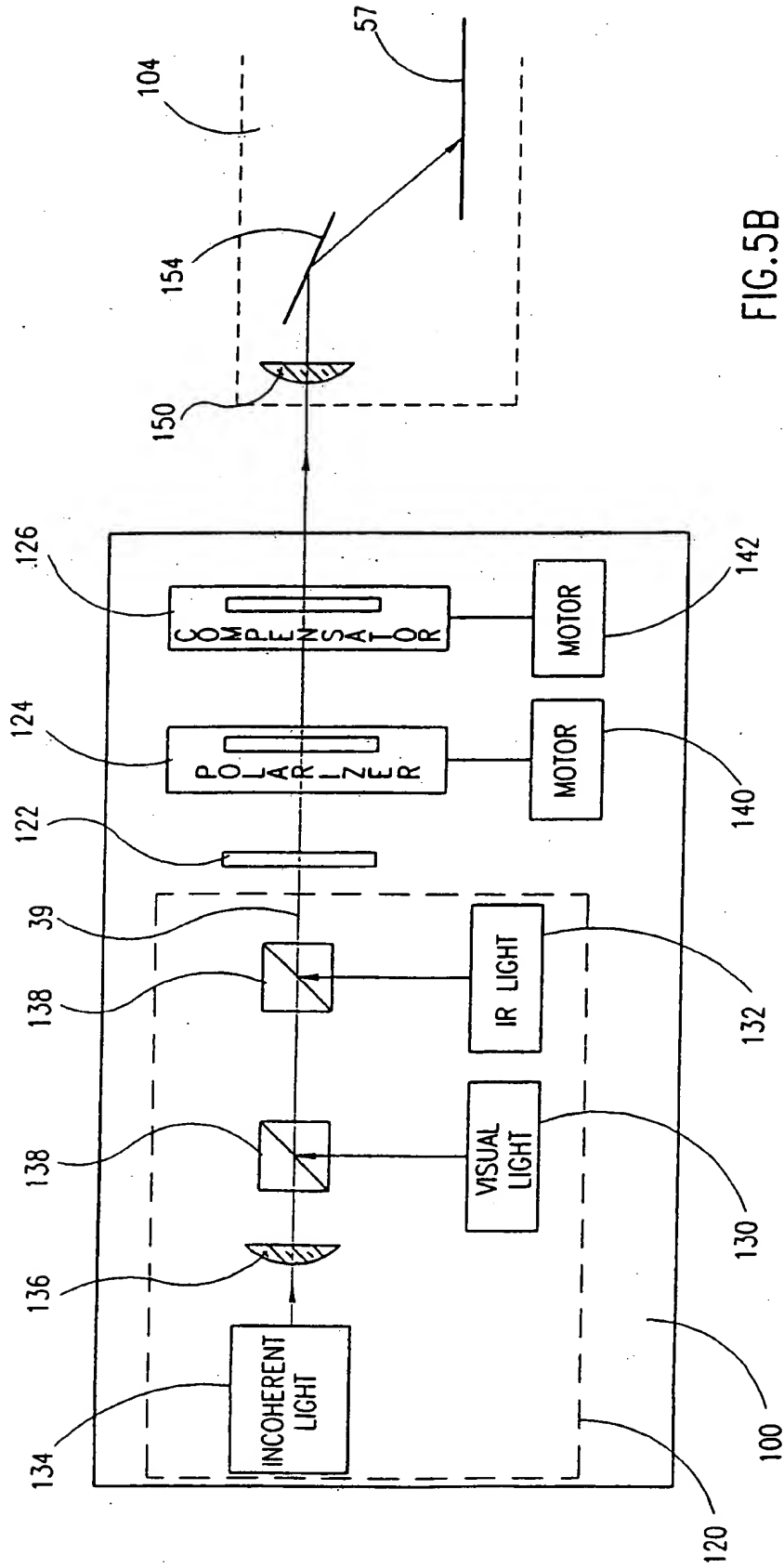


FIG. 5B



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 94 30 7593

| DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT | | | |
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| | | | G01B G01N G01J G03F |
| The present search report has been drawn up for all claims | | | |
| Place of search THE HAGUE | | Date of completion of the search 21 February 1995 | Examiner Hoekstra, F |
| CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS | | | |
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